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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Iran NATO - Ukraine Backs Off Islam
and the West: The Pope's Remarks GMOs - Genetically Modified Rice
PARIS - Friday, September 15, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Iran
NATO - Ukraine Backs Off
Islam and the West: The Pope's Remarks
GMOs - Genetically Modified Rice

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Liberation leads with the headline: "GMOs Are No Laughing Matter."
Inside, the main report is entitled "A Grain of Rice in the Cogs"
and the editorial, entitled "Suspensions" raises its hat to Bayer
CropScience for having given the alert, "despite the price it will
have to pay..." and generally recognizes that "it is in the interest
of multinationals to choose to be transparent." But says Liberation,
"the reasons for the contamination remain a mystery..." (See Part C)
A separate report indicates that "there are no signs of any risk to
humans."

Also on the front page of Liberation one can read: "Al-Qaida: France Targeted." The inside report reiterates the message carried by all television networks that "France's intelligence services take these threats very seriously." Le Figaro's story concentrates on "Algeria's Support to Al-Qaida." Television reports this morning noted that France's contingent in Lebanon was being directly targeted, a story also developed in Le Figaro and the lead story in Le Monde. La Croix interviews General Alain Pellegrini who heads Lebanon's UNIFIL and discusses the broader terms of UNIFIL's mission concluding: "The new reinforcements are undeniably a success for us. But everyone should know that UNIFIL is only one part of the solution to a problem which is in fact spreading to the entire Middle East."

In Le Monde Nathalie Nougayrede analyzes Iran's latest offer, "which leaves the U.S. skeptical." (See Part C)

In Le Parisien Henri Vernet reports on FM Douste-Blazy's visit to the West Bank and his positive reading of the Hamas-Fatah agreement. Vernet comments: "According to Paris, the fact that Hamas is open to sharing power with Fatah is an implicit recognition of Israel. But the FM and President Chirac need to convince the Europeans of this. The Americans, who are aligned with their Israeli allies, are hostile to a softening of their position."

Several outlets report on the reactions in the Muslim world to Pope Benedict's remarks on Islam and his commentary on "the deadly illnesses of religion." Le Figaro notes the angry reaction of Turkey's Director for Religious Affairs and comments: "The Pope has always been opposed to Turkey's EU membership..." All outlets report that Dalil Boubaker, who heads the French Council on Islam, has asked the Pope "to clarify his remarks." (See Part C)

Today's installment in Le Figaro in its post-9/11 series is an op-ed penned by Philippe Hayez, who was Deputy Director of the DGSE (France's CIA) between 2003 and 2006. His column, devoted to France's integration of its intelligence sector, pays tribute to the implementation of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Protection Act: "This reform is as important as the CIA'S creation in 1947. And although all of its impact has not yet been felt, the reform is far more than cosmetic: it is the answer to Al-Qaida and its followers."

The assassination of Russia's central banker Andrey Kozlov is widely reported. Le Figaro comments on his anti-corruption and money laundering policy: "Some of Russia's harshest measures to curb bank fraud have just registered the hardest blow ever."

Le Monde devotes an article to the "harsh" negotiations between the EU and the U.S. on passenger data transfer, despite "all the emotion elicited by the fifth anniversary of 9/11..." Robert Mocny's visit to Brussels is noted. Philippe Ricard, recalling the controversy over CIA secret prisons and Guantanamo, comments: "Cooperation with the U.S. in the judicial sector has become a sensitive issue in Europe..."

La Croix devotes a special insert to "cultural diversity, France's choice to avoid the previous more stigmatizing term of 'cultural exception...'" Jean-Christophe Ploquin comments: "Last year, France was quick to claim victory over the U.S., the great hegemonic rival."

But a year later, the results remain meager and the battle continues." Inside, Culture Minister Donnedieu de Vabre pens an op-ed on the need to ratify the UNESCO convention on cultural diversity. Another op-ed by French University Professor James Cohen debates the issue of multiculturalism in the U.S. versus France.

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:
Iran

"Iran's Offer"

Nathalie Nougayrede in left-of-center Le Monde (09/15): "The signals sent by Teheran are described as convoluted and contradictory. The question is, to what extent do the various Iranian officials' statements reflect the final position that the regime will adopt... The Europeans want to give Iran more time... The US, for its part, is increasing pressure to go forward with sanctions... The American rhetoric has become tougher since President Bush assimilated the danger that Iran represents to al

Qaida, and the differences between the American and European positions are manifest. But according to French sources the disagreements between the P5+1 are being played down."

NATO - Ukraine Backs Off

"Kiev Says 'No' to NATO"

Laure Mandeville in right-of-center Le Figaro (09/15): "Yesterday in Brussels Ukraine's PM confirmed the 180 degree turn taken by his country over the summer when he announced that Kiev was postponing its membership to NATO for an indefinite period. This is one more shift towards Kiev's 'Russian friend' in the chronic back and forth between East and West adopted by Ukraine since 1991... Although, out of politeness, he affirmed the question was still open, the tone he used to make his announcement made his message quite clear. On the EU he remarked that he wanted to pursue membership negotiations, despite the message from the EU that this was premature... Pro-Westerners in Kiev are concerned that Ukraine is dropping NATO, 'a sure thing' for Europe, 'which is not...' and see the move as a step backwards for democracy... What is at stake behind this turnaround is Kiev's independence from Moscow in the energy sector."

GMOs - Genetically Modified Rice

"Suspensions"

Pierre Haski in left-of-center Liberation (09/15): "There are both reassuring and worrying aspects to this story... First, we need to praise Bayer CropScience for pulling the alarm on the contamination of its own product. It is paying dearly for it in terms of its reputation, on the stock market and with regard to the farmers that will take the case to court... Bayer has shown that multinationals have more to gain from transparency... than from being caught red-handed, with the disastrous consequences this would have on the company's image... However the reasons for the contamination are as yet unknown and there is something very worrisome in this fact. If Bayer had not noticed the contamination or had not alerted the authorities, this product would have gone on the market in spite of not being approved in the US and in Europe. Without becoming excessively paranoid about GMOs... no one wants to swallow something that has not been certified by the scientific community and by the governments in question. This will only add fuel to the fire of suspicions that French public opinion has about GMOs."

Islam and the West: The Pope's Remarks

"Muslims Shocked by Pope's Remarks"

Herve Yannou in right-of-center Le Figaro (09/15): "The Pope's message was above all a warning to the West that the Muslim religion is not, like Christianity, motivated by 'reason' inherited from Greek philosophy. No one, not even with the five year anniversary of the September 11 attacks, could have anticipated any Pope drawing such a distinction between Christianity and Islam... Apparently the Pope has decided to go back to the intransigent tendencies of Cardinal Ratzinger who defended the notion that there is only one true religion: that of the Catholic Church." STAPLETON